

Managing Nosocomial Infections Systems - What Opticians need to do

Thank you to you and your teams for all the incredible work you have done in our response to COVID-19, while maintaining critical services and now the challenging task of restarting mainstream NHS services. We must take further action to tackle infections acquired in the NHS itself, whether staff, visitors or patients. You will be aware that the Government launched the **NHS Test and Trace service** last week to minimise community transmission of COVID-19. It is designed to ensure that anyone who develops symptoms can quickly be tested to find out if they have the virus and, if they do, to trace close recent contacts who will be notified that they should self-isolate at home for 14 days.

- If a member of staff develops symptoms of COVID-19 they should follow the stay at home guidance, and get tested as soon as possible. If the result is negative, the advice from Public Health England states that they “can return to work when they are medically fit to do so, following discussion with their line manager and appropriate local risk assessment. Interpret negative results with caution together with clinical assessment.” If they test positive, they can return to work after seven days, unless they still have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell/taste, in which case they must continue to self-isolate until they feel better.
- Where a member of NHS staff tests positive for coronavirus, the starting point is that the Test and Trace self-isolation rules apply as anywhere else, and close contacts must self-isolate if the NHS test and trace service advises them to do so. **Close contact excludes circumstances where PPE is being worn in accordance with current guidance on infection, prevention and control.**
- In other circumstances, i.e. where a member of staff has come into contact outside work with someone who has subsequently tested positive for coronavirus, NHS staff are subject to the same test and trace protocols as all other members of the public. If a healthcare professional or another member of your team is contacted by the Test and Trace service and advised to self-isolate for 14 days, they must do so.

All primary care contractors (GPs, pharmacists, dentists and **optometrists**) **are asked to take the following actions:**

1. To prepare for potential staff absence, providers should **review their existing business continuity plans** and take actions as required, especially what this means when you return back to your workplace.
2. This includes ensuring that arrangements are in place **between buddies** to maintain patient access to services.
3. Providers should **inform their commissioner** as soon as they consider that delivery of the full contracted service may be compromised by staff absence due to Test and Trace. The commissioner will work with the contractor to put business continuity arrangements in place and to maintain access to services for patients. The provider will need to update information on patient accessible

websites and the impacted NHS 111 Directory of Services profiles will need to be updated.

4. The commissioner will **inform the Regional Incident Coordination Centre** without delay and work with the provider to implement appropriate business continuity measures. The Regional Team will notify the National Incident Coordination Centre.